

# The More You Know

Ephesians 1:7-14 April 19, 2023

Since 1989, NBC has aired public service announcements under the banner *The More You Know*. The very first segment featured Tom Brokaw. For 34 years, TV actors, sports stars, and even presidents have appeared with the goal of bringing us “as much information as possible” about certain topics. Of course, the commercials are only 30 seconds long, so I’m not sure they’re hitting that “as much information as possible” target.

One of Paul’s major goals in writing to the Ephesians was to help them understand what it really means to be in Christ. He said, “*I keep asking that...God...may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*”<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 3 he prays that Christians would be rooted and established and able to comprehend God’s love for them. The more we know, the more our lives will be full of the fullness of God.<sup>2</sup>

As we saw last time, the letter opens with an ecstatic, three-stanza song, describing the wonders of salvation. The first section is about God’s work in the past - the plan of election and predestination and how that provides the way for us to be adopted into the family of God. Next the song turns to the present and the future - how God’s redemptive plan brings immeasurable blessings for both.

## **Ephesians 1:7 - <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace**

Redemption means that we were captives, we were slaves, but God paid a ransom to set us free, and purchase us for Himself. It could only be done by the blood of Jesus Christ. There is no other way for a person to be saved - there’s no other path that leads to heaven. Paul says it right here: You have redemption through the blood of Christ. But Hebrews is even more explicit:

## **Hebrews 9:22b - without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**

In pagan religions, blood was brought to appease angry gods. That’s not what’s happening between Jesus and the Father. Instead, God uses His greatest treasure to pay for our debt.<sup>3</sup> One commentator writes, “*Grace is not something God gives us; rather, it is God’s giving us Himself.*”<sup>4</sup>

If you are in Christ, you have been liberated from sin. You are no longer its prisoner. You no longer have to live under its tyrannical power.<sup>5</sup> But, on top of that, along with *redemption* God gives us *forgiveness*. That’s an important extra.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 3:17-19

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Neufeld *Ephesians: Believers Church Bible Commentary*

<sup>4</sup> Klyne Snodgrass *Ephesians*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

Have you ever wronged someone, maybe broken one of their things, and after you squared the debt, you could tell they still held resentment against you in their hearts? God makes it very clear that He not only *frees* us, He *forgives* us in Christ. In Hebrews 8, God says: “*I will forgive their wrongdoing and I will never again remember their sins.*”

What a wonderful announcement Paul was giving them. Of course, it’s easy for us to overlook that *some* of the members of the church receiving this letter *actually were* slaves. One quarter of the city’s population were slaves.<sup>6</sup> If I were one of the slaves hearing this message, I might think, “How about some *practical* liberation for me *right now.*” Why wasn’t that on the table?

**Ephesians 1:8 - <sup>8</sup>that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding.**

God’s grace has been poured out. We’re want to be all about grace here at Calvary. We want it to be definitive of how we think about God and how we relate to others. We believe grace changes everything.<sup>7</sup> God has poured out so much grace that it far outpaces the volume and power of sin in our world. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.<sup>8</sup> There is more than enough for all of the problems that have multiplied throughout the world. That grace is for you and works through you.

Part of the benefit of God’s grace is that we are able to receive all wisdom and understanding. Wisdom means knowing God and our relation to Him. Understanding means knowing how to live faithfully in concrete situations.<sup>9</sup> R. Kent Hughes writes, “Those [equipped with wisdom and understanding] can discern the spirit of the times and stand tall and confident.”<sup>10</sup>

Coming out of paganism, the Ephesians needed a new moral compass. They needed a new philosophy. Many of them had been steeped in sorcery and the occult. They came and burned their magic books and joined the church. Now Paul is telling them they *have* the instruction and revelation necessary to understand life and navigate rightly.

**Ephesians 1:9-10 - <sup>9</sup>He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.**

To us, the word “mystery” means something vague, shrouded, unknown. In the Bible, the term is not used that way. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “*The word mystery in the New Testament does not mean something that is incomprehensible to the human mind, but is rather something that is undiscoverable by the unaided human mind.*”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ephesus.us/life-in-ephesus/slavery-in-ephesus/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cclakeside.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Why-Grace-Changes-Everything.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Romans 5:20

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Fowl *Ephesians: A Commentary*

<sup>10</sup> R. Kent Hughes *Ephesians: The Mystery Of The Body Of Christ*

<sup>11</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition Of Ephesians 1*

A mystery in the New Testament is a teaching that God specifically reveals to His people that we wouldn't have been able to figure out on our own. The mystery here in verses 9 and 10 is that God's will was to bring everything in heaven and on earth together in Christ. The International Standard Version has a helpful translation:

**Ephesians 1:10 (ISV) - [God's plan is] <sup>10</sup>to usher in the fullness of the times and to gather up all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth.**

This would have special significance to the Ephesians because they were surrounded by what were called "mystery religions." They were super-secret cults with strange and awful initiation rituals.<sup>12</sup> "Partakers committed sacrilege if they divulged what happened during these ceremonies."<sup>13</sup> From what we know, some of their practices were perverted copies of Christian truth. They saw their cult as a *brotherhood*. Their initiation rituals usually mimed death and resurrection. Confession was expected, followed by baptism. And, there's record of a rite held where participants distributed and ate the roasted heart of a child - a satanic forgery of communion.

So now Paul says, "No, in Christianity, the truths of God are not on a secret, need-to-know basis. *Anyone* is welcome to receive the whole truth about the plan of God." Jesus told His disciples "the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given to you to know."<sup>14</sup> Paul explained to the Corinthians that God reveals everything by the Spirit for those who love Him.<sup>15</sup>

Christ is gathering up all things to Himself. That doesn't mean everyone is going to be saved in the end, it means there is nothing that will slip through His fingers.

God accomplishes His plan differently in different ages. I'm reading out of the CSB version, and when we do, there's an important term that gets hidden away - it's the word *dispensation*. You see it in the New King James Version. Your version might use the word "administration."

God administers His redemptive program in different ways at different times. The plainest example is the fact that we no longer bring lambs to church for sacrifice. *That* administration is over. Classical dispensationalism identifies seven different administrations. People are always saved the same way - by grace through faith - but the way God interacts with man, His arrangements with them, and His focus is different in each dispensation. Here at Calvary, we are dispensationalist. It's not an essential doctrine, but it influences our understanding of God's plan, the prophecies found in Scripture, the importance of the nation of Israel, and the way we interpret the Bible.

Dispensationalists sometimes get a bad rap out in the wider Christian world. Years ago I was talking with a friend and I asked him if he was reading anything interesting and he told me he was reading a book on how to talk to dispensationalists. And he proceeded to say dispensationalists

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mystery-religion/Beliefs-and-practices>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/mystery-religions.html>

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 13:11

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:7-12

miss the main thing Jesus talked about and never talk about the Kingdom of God and they're all cessationists. So I said, "Well, as a dispensationalist, I don't think you're right about what we believe." It seemed obvious to me he had never actually read anything a dispensationalist like Charles Ryrie had written or talked to a living, breathing dispensationalist.

But here, Paul's point is that Christ is gathering up all things so that when the fullness of time comes, all will be accomplished according to His gracious will. This is why some of the Ephesians would remain slaves. This is why you and I will suffer. We live in a fallen world, racked by sin, but God's long-suffering waits because His desire is that people would get saved.

When the Twin Towers came down on September 11, thousands of first responders rushed into the carnage in an effort to save people stuck in the rubble. After 27 hours, only 20 survivors were pulled out.<sup>16</sup> In the 20 years since, more survivors and first responders have died from the toxins they were exposed to than died in the attack itself.<sup>17</sup> 2,974 people lost their lives when the Towers fell. 4,343 have died as a result of being there after the destruction, particularly first responders.

Was it worth it for all those people to rush in and sacrifice themselves? Well, the 20 people pulled out of the rubble certainly think so. Their families do, too. The lost are worth saving.

As we suffer, we often want it to end. End the slavery. End the sadness. It *will* one day, in the fullness of time. But, for the time being, God's long-suffering waits, allowing us to endure with His grace and strength and peace and joy, so that more can be gathered in. You know, Paul wanted to get to glory, too. But he understood the importance of God's work. And he said in Philippians, "It would be better to get to heaven, but to live on in the flesh means fruitful work for me."

40 billion people have been born on the earth since Christ died,<sup>18</sup> including you and me. I'm glad His long-suffering waited for me. Who else is He waiting for? Who is He sending me after?

**Ephesians 1:11 - <sup>11</sup>In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will,**

We have *received* an inheritance. It's done. It's ours. You are not on probation with God, you're *adopted*! He signed the paper with His own blood.

The word Paul uses for plan here is not the same one he used before. Here it means *purpose* but it also is a word used for the showbread in the Tabernacle and Temple.<sup>19</sup> This highlights the fact that God has not only given *us* an inheritance, but that we are *His* inheritance. Thomas Neufeld writes, "*In bringing into being a worshiping community, God has given himself a present!*"<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rescue\\_and\\_recovery\\_effort\\_after\\_the\\_September\\_11\\_attacks\\_on\\_the\\_World\\_Trade\\_Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rescue_and_recovery_effort_after_the_September_11_attacks_on_the_World_Trade_Center)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.asbestos.com/featured-stories/9-11-lingering-health-effects/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.ined.fr/en/everything\\_about\\_population/demographic-facts-sheets/faq/how-many-people-since-the-first-humans/](https://www.ined.fr/en/everything_about_population/demographic-facts-sheets/faq/how-many-people-since-the-first-humans/)

<sup>19</sup> *Strong's Greek Lexicon*

<sup>20</sup> Neufeld

Our predestined purpose is to bring God praise and glory. Like the showbread, in the coming ages we will be put on display as an example of the immeasurable riches of God's grace and kindness.<sup>21</sup>

So, since it's all done, does that mean I can just coast? I can be a spiritual trust-fund baby and cash in once I get to eternity? No. God calls us to activity and investment right now *because* we are His children. There is Kingdom work to do now. Jesus told us to store up treasures in heaven. John said,

**2 John 8 - <sup>8</sup>Watch yourselves so that you don't lose what we have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward.**

As we receive these diverse blessings from God, we are able to exercise our faith, invest in His Kingdom, and cooperate with the plan He is accomplishing - to enjoy and enhance our inheritance.

**Ephesians 1:12 - <sup>12</sup>so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.**

Notice the language of choice here. Man's free will is a given in this song.

"Might bring praise to His glory" is a phrase I find hard to get a handle on. Once again, the ISV is helpful. "So that we...might live for his praise and glory." Those are the goals of our lives. How can I praise God? How can I glorify Him? These are base functions of every Christian life, day-by-day.

As we stand back a little from the song, we see Paul excited about the fact that believers can know, can understand, can be constantly growing and deepening. Paul is describing a relationship with God that is strong and confident and well built. He'll later say, "I pray that you guys would be rooted and established. God *wants* you to realize and understand all this stuff."

Our modern, Christian culture sometimes celebrates *unknowing*, weakness, vagueness, the emotional experience of what's called "brokenness." All I can say is that Paul's song is totally the opposite. God's desire is that you and I have wisdom and hope and confidence and clarity and assurance so that we can more and more experience His fullness in all aspects of our lives.

**Ephesians 1:13 - <sup>13</sup>You, too, have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed in him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,**

This is another significant verse, especially given the debate over the doctrine of election that we talked about last time. *When* were you sealed in the Holy Spirit? In eternity past when God picked you but not the person next to you? No. You were sealed when you heard the Gospel and believed.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 2:7

This is why the preaching of the Gospel is so essential. And it's why we should take our commission to preach very seriously.

**Romans 10:14 - <sup>14</sup>How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?**

We see the Trinity represented in Paul's song. The Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit sealing. One God in Three Persons.

This sealing work of the Spirit speaks of God's authentic guarantee to do what He has promised. Seals were used on documents or placed on cargo before shipping.<sup>22</sup> The Holy Spirit does a lot in our lives, but part of what He does is *guarantee* the promises of God. He guarantees that we won't be abandoned, that we will be protected from the enemy, that God will renew us, that He will help us in our weakness, and so much more.

And, again, He's not just given us a token. To guarantee His promises, God gives us *Himself*. He is always going to the furthest extremes of care and compassion and tenderness toward us.

**Ephesians 1:14 - <sup>14</sup>The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.**

If the Holy Spirit is just the down payment...how *rich* is our inheritance? Think of a down payment on a house. 5%, 10%, 20%. Compared to what you pay in the end, it's a small amount. God says that the Holy Spirit, with all His power and presence and goodness and generosity is just the down payment of all we'll receive in the end. What an incredible thought!

Back in 1989, when *The More You Know* started, the ads focused on negative things. In that first commercial, Tom Brokaw said, "The more you know about an impending disaster, the more likely you are to do something about it." The ads were designed to "make you familiar with [deepening crises] and terrible situations" because, "as citizens our job is to do something about it."<sup>23</sup>

Paul didn't focus on the negative or difficult aspects of life. This song is all about blessing and joy and richness and the glories of being a Christian - that we have something to *celebrate!* Meanwhile, he was writing with a heavy chain tying him to a Roman guard. A fact he doesn't bother to mention until chapter 6.

Some of the Ephesians were slaves. Some were suffering. All would struggle in one way or another. But Paul draws their attention to what God has done, what's He is doing, and what He has promised to do in the future on our behalf. This is the plan. This is the Christian life. This is our well-informed, strong and fruitful hope. The more we know about that, the more we're able to put our lives in

---

<sup>22</sup> Snodgrass

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hi5anNU3Glg>

perspective and the rest in the fact that God is caring for us and will go above and beyond what we could ever ask or imagine as He works out His loving work in our lives.